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SOURCE Stuttgarter Nachrichten, No 206, 1949.

SOVIETS EXPLOIT GERMAN PRISONERS
IN CZECH URANIUM MINES

The uranium-ore mining administration of the Jachymovske Doly (Jachymov Mines) in Czechoslovakia is located in the former Sudeten German tobacco factory in Jachymov. The administration is under the control of Soviet engineers and officers in civilian clothes. German prisoner-of-war engineers, watchmakers, and fitters -- under Soviet supervision -- have developed instruments in the Jachymovske Mines which locate the uranium. Air samples from the shafts are examined in the laboratory in order to determine the uranium content of the air. Ore samples are sent to the laboratory from every mine truck leaving the smaller shafts. Every day 400 men from Jachymov go into the mines with instruments to search for uranium.

The technical personnel of the mine administration consists of Soviet and Czech engineers. The technical apparatus, the number of employees, and the organization of the uranium mines have increased materially since 1947. The Soviets are not satisfied with mining the known deposits in the Erzgebirge (Ore Mountains). They search for the uranium throughout the country. Two new ore pits were opened up near Pischibrau / Příbram? /, in the vicinity of Prague, in January 1949.

Continuously, day and night, 300 Tatra trucks, driven by Czech drivers, carry the uranium ore across the East German border to the Soviet transport aircraft in Chemnitz. Border-crossing points are closed off and patrolled over a wide area by Czech soldiers and Soviets in civilian clothes.

The problem of replacing labor forces for the dangerous job of uranium mining was solved by the Czechs in a manner different from that employed by the Soviets in the Eastern Zone of Germany. German prisoners of war work in most of the pits. A punitive camp for German prisoners of war was erected near the new No 2 pit at Pachtibran [Pribram?]. Also, hundreds of Sudeten German women were compelled to work in the ore-mining area. Czech prisoners work in other pits. Only in the Breitenbach pit near Johannegeorgenstadt, near the Eastern border, are the workers known to be Czech civilians. They are regularly employed and earn from 15,000 to 20,000 crowns a month. Miners who strike ore can raise their wages, through premium payments, to 30,000-60,000 crowns monthly.

- 1 -

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Czech miners working underground are equipped with German, US, Czech, and Soviet pneumatic drills. Czech brigades use US broaching machines. Only German prisoners of war and criminal prisoners work with pick and shovel.

The prisoner-of-war barracks are located in the immediate vicinity of the pits. In the Elias pit, near Jachymov, 750 German prisoners of war are employed, with 500 of them working underground. Also, 300 Sudeten German women are employed there. They are supposed to fulfill the high production quotas with their primitive hand tools. They have neither dust masks nor work clothes. Their state of health is very poor. Most of them suffer from silicosis. Since 1948 German prisoners of war have received clothes every now and then, because their ragged uniforms are falling apart. Rations are adequate. They are supposed to receive 2 crowns daily, which is a mere pittance in comparison with the wages of the Czech civilian workers, but they are not paid as a rule. The Sudeten-German women work under similar conditions at the shaking tables. Without protection they are exposed to the dust, to the dangerous radiation of uranium, and to the lust of the Russians and Czechs in the camp.

Strict security measures are taken to prevent the workers from leaving the area. However, attempts are constantly being made to escape, and occasionally they are successful.

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- 2 -

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